



**In Transit**

# March/April 2010

**A Newsletter for King County Metro Transit Employees**



*From the desk  
of the General  
Manager*

## Assaults hit home

Normally, this column gives me an opportunity to celebrate our achievements and thank Metro's employees for their excellent work. But in this issue I am compelled instead to talk about two disturbing events that took place in late January.

We began the year in the belief that the safety and security programs we had in place were sufficient and effective. But these deeply troubling security incidents on Metro property have forced us to reassess our practices.

As you probably already know, one of our drivers was brutally assaulted by a passenger in Tukwila on Jan. 23. The operator was beaten unconscious by a teenage boy who was angry because she didn't let him exit by the rear door.

We are taking several steps, listed below, in response to this appalling incident. I sincerely hope that they will prevent any similar attack from happening in the future.

- Operations and Vehicle Maintenance are working to add more buses equipped with surveillance cameras to late-night routes that experience more security incidents. When this is done, about half of the buses assigned to late-night routes will have

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King County Executive Dow Constantine visited Pass Sales employees, including Sonja Schuett, right, in February to thank them for a job well done.

## Responding to the ORCA surge

**H**elping customers make the switch to the new ORCA regional fare pass posed a greater-than-expected challenge for staff members at Metro's pass sales offices.

The \$5 cards were being offered for free through Dec. 31. In late December, the sales offices in the King Street Center and the Westlake mezzanine were flooded with customers who wanted cards. They also wanted information about the cards—where to get them, how to use them, eligibility requirements for special fare cards, and whether the cards expire. And many had concerns about no longer being able to use Metro's paper transfers for other systems such as Sound Transit.

Lines got longer and wait times increased, severely taxing customers' patience and the employees' ability to respond. Metro took many steps to meet this challenge, including:

- Hiring six temporary employees so pass sales windows at both locations would be fully staffed during regular hours.
- Opening both sales offices on Saturdays through the end of February, and opening them earlier (7:30 a.m. at the King Street Center and 8 a.m. at Westlake) during peak customer days at the beginning and end of the month.
- Bringing in volunteers from across the Transit division, including operators and Sales and Customer

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## Top 10 initiatives for 2010

1. New technology implementation and integration: OBS/CCS, the new radio system, and ORCA
2. Enhanced customer communications services and tools, including Metro Online website revisions and RideshareOnline.com enhancements
3. Audit responses: business planning, construction, and scheduling efficiencies
4. Service implementation: RapidRide, State Route 520, Alaskan Way Viaduct, and Link integration
5. Major policy efforts:
  - a. Regional Transit Task Force implementation, including developing 2011 state legislative funding proposal
  - b. Fare policy evaluation
6. ATU contract renewal
7. Safety and security: accident, injury, and assault prevention
8. Major construction projects: Atlantic/Central Base expansion, RapidRide A and B lines
9. Trolley evaluation: comprehensive assessment of costs vs. benefits and future technologies
10. Rail transition: move from start-up to implementation

# Metro's priorities set for the year

**M**etro's management team gathered Jan. 28 for this year's meeting of managers, supervisors, and chiefs. In addition to reviewing Metro's accomplishments and performance in 2009, they received an update on our financial situation for the coming two years and heard three special presentations:

- Finding scheduling efficiencies, a response to the 2009 performance audit, by Service Development Scheduling Supervisor **Jon Bez**.
- The Ryerson Base renovation and Atlantic/Central Base expansion projects, by Design and Construction Manager **Randy Witt**.
- The future of information technology, by Transportation Information Technology Manager **Wayne Watanabe**.

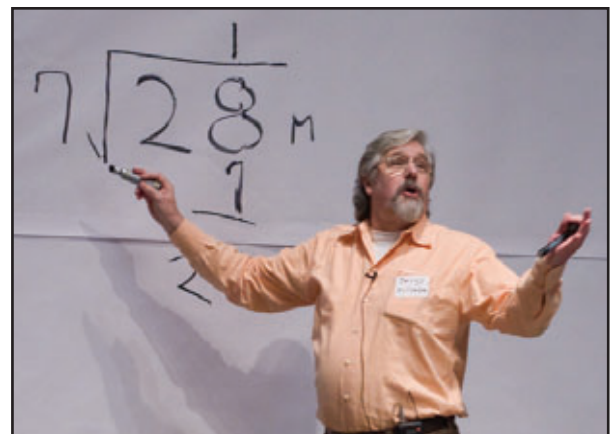


**General Manager Kevin Desmond surveys the audience.**

The meeting culminated with the unveiling of Metro's top 10 initiatives for 2010 (see box). A slide presentation of the program is available on Metro's intranet site: <http://dot.metrokc.gov/transit>.



**Design and Construction Manager Randy Witt talks about the Ryerson Base remodel.**



**Power and Facilities Manager Jerry Rutledge gives a math lesson.**

**Lynn Matteoni, Vehicle Maintenance, takes notes.**





Cheryl Rowe (North Base), right, was one of several operators detailed to help Sales and Customer Services during the transition to ORCA by greeting customers, answering their questions, and directing them to the correct sales area for assistance.

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## ORCA surge

Services staff members, on peak sales days to “work the lines,” answering customer questions and providing assistance at ticket vending machines.

- Extending the free-card offer to March 1. This was suggested by Pass Sales Coordinator **Lois Watt**, and agreed to by the seven agencies participating in the ORCA program.
- Targeting a direct community outreach effort to key social service and senior agencies to relieve senior and disabled Regional Reduced Fare Permit holders of the need to visit the pass sales offices in person. This effort—led by **Tom Randall**, chief of customer service response—had already reached more than 600 customers at eight social service and senior center agencies by the end of February, with visits scheduled at several more agencies through May.
- Quickly producing signs and customer communication materials under the direction of **Bob Virkelyst**, supervisor of marketing and service information, and **Deborah Brockway**, chief of marketing and promotion.
- Distributing posters and information to retail outlets throughout King County by Pass Sales Employer Retail Program staff under the direction of **Carol Merrill**, customer services supervisor.
- Sending a mailing to all known customers who use senior and permanent Regional Reduced Fare Permits (RRFPs)—about 28,000 people. This effort was coordinated through the Department of Transportation’s Communications Office. The campaign also included a poster and letter that were mailed to about 300 social service and senior agencies, inviting them to have Metro staff members visit their agencies to discuss the transition to ORCA.
- Establishing an RRFP Helpline (206-205-9185) in January. By mid-February, staff members had responded to more than 350 calls with the help of **Sara Stefano**, the Communications Office administrator; **Theresa Huey**, lead customer services coordinator; and **Will Powell**, administrator in Sales and Customer Services.
- Adding express lines and additional seating for customers at the King Street sales office. Pass Sales staff members at both King Street and Westlake willingly worked extended hours and weekends to accommodate Metro’s customers during the transition to ORCA.

Lead customer service coordinators **Mark Konecny**, **Lisa Muhammad**, and **Mayre Washington** deserve thanks for their part in the successful implementation of these strategies.

*In Transit* salutes all employees who participated in this effort.

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## General Manager

cameras. Over the next three years, I expect to increase the number of camera coaches from the 245 we have today to 615 through a combination of federal grants and local funding.

- We are developing and testing prototype shields made of Lexan that would help protect operators in the driver’s seat. We’re installing demonstration shields on different bus types and will assign one bus with a shield to each base. We’ll test each bus with a shield in service during April and May, and I’m looking forward to hearing what operators think of them. Based on operator feedback, research on best practices in North America, and close collaboration with the operator’s union, ATU Local 587, we will make a decision on whether—and how—to install shields throughout the fleet.
- We’re reviewing our policies and customer service training to reinforce our operators’ ability to deal effectively with potentially dangerous situations.

Five days after our driver was assaulted, a teenage girl was beaten, kicked, and robbed in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel’s Westlake Station—while our contract security guards stood by, following their instructions to only “observe and report” crimes in progress.

If you have seen the video of this assault, which received extensive play on both local and national media, you know how disturbing it is, and you probably found the guards’ lack of intervention hard to accept. I know I did. You can be assured that we are taking a second look at our security practices as a result.

The public’s confidence in our security measures may have been shaken, but I assure you that we have considerable surveillance and security assets in place in the transit tunnel. We should not forget that our past record of security in the tunnel has been good, especially when you consider that more than 10 million customers boarded buses and trains in the tunnel in 2009.

Although the Jan. 28 incident does not represent the norm for the tunnel, it

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# KUDOS

## IN TRANSIT



Operations Chief John Lewis, left, poses with U.S. Congressman John Lewis (no relation) at this year's celebration honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

### ■ Chief nets celebrity speaker for Martin Luther King, Jr. day—

When Operations Chief **John Lewis** started planning a spring 2009 trip to Washington, D.C., he sent an e-mail to Congressman John Lewis (no relation), a hero of the Civil Rights Movement. The congressman, “as well as sharing my name, is a personal hero to me,” Lewis said. “I just wanted a chance to meet him, introduce myself, and shake his hand.”

Lewis asked for five minutes of the congressman's time. To his surprise, the request was granted, and the five-minute meeting turned into 45 minutes. The congressman talked about his experiences during the Freedom Rides, the March on Washington, and the inauguration of President Obama. Lewis told the congressman that King County had been renamed for Martin Luther King, Jr., described the county's annual celebration in King's honor, and

suggested the congressman join in the festivities at a future celebration.

“He said that would be nice, and instructed me to meet his scheduler, which I did,” Lewis said. “I followed up with an e-mail invitation when I returned to Seattle.”

Congressman Lewis accepted the invitation and gave an inspiring keynote address at the 2010 celebration. If you missed the event, it's available for viewing on the King County website via the KCTV link.



Congressman Lewis gives the keynote address at King County's 2010 celebration honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

■ **Streetcar employee named to Regional Transit Task Force**—**Carl Jackson**, Operations and Maintenance supervisor with the South Lake Union Streetcar, has been appointed by King County Executive **Dow Constantine** to serve on a Regional Transit Task Force. Jackson, representing ATU Local 587, is one of 28 regional and community leaders appointed to the task force. The group is charged with developing policy options by September that could help shape the future of Metro services with available resources. The task force

is geographically balanced and includes a mix of elected officials and representatives of business, labor, education, and human service agencies.

### ■ Safety Award goes to Bellevue Base—

The Bellevue Base Operations team aced the 2009 Base Safety Contest by achieving a whopping 44.3-percent reduction in preventable accidents. Central Base came in second with a 13.8-percent reduction. This is Bellevue Base's fifth win, and its employees will be treated to an all-day meal cooked at the base later this year.

### ■ Operators praised for role during fare increase and ORCA transition—

The January fare increases and regional elimination of intersystem transfers took place without major negative feedback from the riding public. “We gave operators a tough

## Transit operators of the month

### February 2010

Atlantic Base: **Perry Tapper**

Central Base: **Stephen Cameron**

Eastside Campus: **Mary Ruth Graham**

North Base: **Christopher “Eddie” St. Luise**

Ryerson Base: **Stanley Biernacki**

South Base: **Revie Policarpio**

### March 2010

Atlantic Base: **Jeffrey Wright**

Central Base: **Timothy Johnson**

Eastside Campus: (declined)

North Base: **Jessica Sutter**

Ryerson Base: **Dennis Caputo**

South Base: **Saohouy Ieng**

hand to play because of the complexity of these changes,” Operations Manager **Jim O’Rourke** told operators in a Jan. 13 bulletin. “You did a remarkable job of avoiding fare disputes and patiently explaining the changes to customers.” O’Rourke also acknowledged that not all of the challenges have been solved, and reminded operators to continue educating customers on how to correctly use their ORCA fare cards.

■ **Bus drivers get appreciation** — First, the Metropolitan King County Council declared the week of Feb. 22-28 Bus Driver Appreciation Week in King County (read customer comments on the Seattle Transit Blog, <http://seattletransitblog.com/2010/02/23/bus-driver-appreciation-week/#comments>). Then, in honor of International Bus Driver Appreciation Day on March 18, the University of Washington sent Metro General Manager **Kevin Desmond** a letter thanking our operators for their dedication and service.

“For decades the University has relied on transit operators to ensure safe and timely access to classrooms and jobs,” says the letter, signed by the university’s director of transportation services and the presidents of two student government organizations. “More members of the UW community get to campus using transit than any other transportation option,” they wrote, which is “...a testament to the clean, safe, and reliable transit service made possible by the professionalism of King County Metro operators. Nearly 10 percent of the rides taken on King County Metro are made by members of the UW community, and as a community we are grateful to (Metro) operators for their assistance in providing the 60,000 people of the University of Washington with access to education and employment.”

#### On the Web:

- County Council proclamation: [www.kingcounty.gov/council/news/2010/February/busdriverappreciationweek.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/council/news/2010/February/busdriverappreciationweek.aspx)

## RapidRide may use new system to secure wheelchairs

**M**etro is evaluating a new, faster wheelchair-securing system for possible use in RapidRide buses. Riders who use wheelchairs would face the rear of the bus and would not need the tie-down straps currently used on regular Metro buses. Securing wheelchairs would take less time, helping RapidRide service meet its goal of reducing overall travel time for riders.

A Metro team headed by **Melony Joyce** (Accessible Services) visited other transit agencies that use rear-facing securement methods to learn from their experiences. **Jack Woodworth** (Vehicle Maintenance) designed the prototype and installed it in one of Metro’s new RapidRide buses.

Metro staff members and six volunteer riders who use mobility devices tested the system in February. The volunteers’ initial reactions were positive, and the concept looks promising. The project team will adjust the design based on what they learned during the test, and will make a recommendation on whether to adopt the new system for all RapidRide buses later this year.

Also participating in Metro’s test were team members **Joe Dorage** (Operations Training), **Tomi Geivett** (Accessible Services), **Dan Porter** (Operations Training), **Sue Stewart** (Transit Safety), and **George Stites** (Vehicle Maintenance). **Lance Chan** of Veolia, an Access Transportation contractor, videotaped the test.



**Customer Eric Parkin tries out the prototype wheelchair securement system while Lance Chan of Veolia, an Access Transportation contractor, captures the test on video.**

- Public comments on the Seattle Transit Blog: <http://seattletransitblog.com/2010/02/23/bus-driver-appreciation-week/#comments>
- University of Washington letter to Metro: [www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/metrotransit/intransit/](http://www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/metrotransit/intransit/)

### ***In Transit*** online

Current and past issues of *In Transit* are available on the King County website at [www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/MetroTransit/InTransit](http://www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/MetroTransit/InTransit).



# SHORT SHOTS IN TRANSIT

News briefs in and around the Transit Division



**Bikes can now be loaded and unloaded at any downtown stop.**

■ **Changes to benefit bicyclists**—Metro launched a one-year demonstration project in February to test the safety and operational effects of allowing bicycles to be loaded or unloaded at any regular bus stop in the downtown Seattle Ride Free Area, including the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, at any time of day. The restriction on loading and unloading bicycles during peak hours was the last to go after a gradual easing of limitations over the past several years. Another change in the works will be “on-demand” bicycle lockers, scheduled for testing in 2011. At present, bicycle lockers are available only on a key-lease system, making them useable only by corresponding key holders, even though they may remain empty much of the time. An on-demand system will allow anyone with an access card to use any available locker, giving our bicycle customers greater flexibility

and making better use of our bicycle parking resources.

■ **Winter Olympics brought heightened security**—Metro’s Transit Police worked with the Seattle Police Department, King County Sheriff’s Office, Washington State Patrol, and federal law enforcement agencies to beef up security for bus and Link light rail service while the 2010 Winter Olympic Games took place in Vancouver, BC. Metro security was enhanced with the addition of high-visibility teams such as the Transportation Security Administration’s Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response (VIPR) teams, which combine federal air marshals, surface transportation security inspectors, transportation security officers, behavior detection officers, and explosives detection canine teams. The games may be over, but some of the enhanced security

measures remain in effect to counter potential terrorist threats. As always, Metro employees and customers are reminded to say something to the operator, Control Center, or Transit Police if they observe any suspicious activity.

■ **Sections reorganize**—Metro’s Service Development section recently completed a substantial reorganization. Many former members of the Speed and Reliability group have been integrated into Service Development, while others have been reassigned to Transit IT.

Research and Management Information became part of Service Development on Jan. 1. The core functions of this 10-person group, supervised by **Chuck Sawyer**, remain the same—including fare policy and pricing, performance monitoring, customer research, and administration of the regional fare agreement and ORCA.

Staff members moving from Speed and Reliability include **Irin Limargo**, who leads the newly formed Transit Systems and Traffic Engineering group. This group, which includes **Mike Boonsripisal** and **Owen Kehoe**, provides transit-system-oriented traffic engineering and manages traffic and transit operation projects, including mitigation for the Alaskan Way Viaduct and State Route 520 projects.

Former Speed and Reliability staff members who have joined Service Development’s Transit Route Facilities group include **David Cantey**, **Mike Cechvala**, **Franco Fernandes**, and **Rose McCracken**.



**Deputy Tim Morgan and “Stevie” check a Metro bus for explosives.**

This move concentrates project management resources in one work unit with the near-term focus of delivering the capital elements of RapidRide. The group is incorporating capital budget and consultant contract management systems developed under the Transit Speed and Reliability program, and will continue supporting budget development and management of corridor improvement projects.

**John Toone** and **Sidney Quach** from Speed and Reliability have been reassigned to Transit IT to manage, operate, and maintain the Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) and Regional Transit Signal Priority networks. They support communication with the ITS field devices such as real-time signs and street-side fare vending machines.

For the success of this reorganization, said Service Development Manager **Victor Obeso**, “we owe a debt of gratitude to **Ellen Bevington**, retired supervisor of Speed and Reliability; **Sharon Slebodnick**, supervisor of Transit Route Facilities; and **Chuck Sawyer**, supervisor of Research and Management Information, for their assistance and support in achieving these changes, as well as the IT leadership of **Wayne Watanabe** and **Dan Overgaard**.”



## Performance corner

### Bus ridership dips, van ridership up

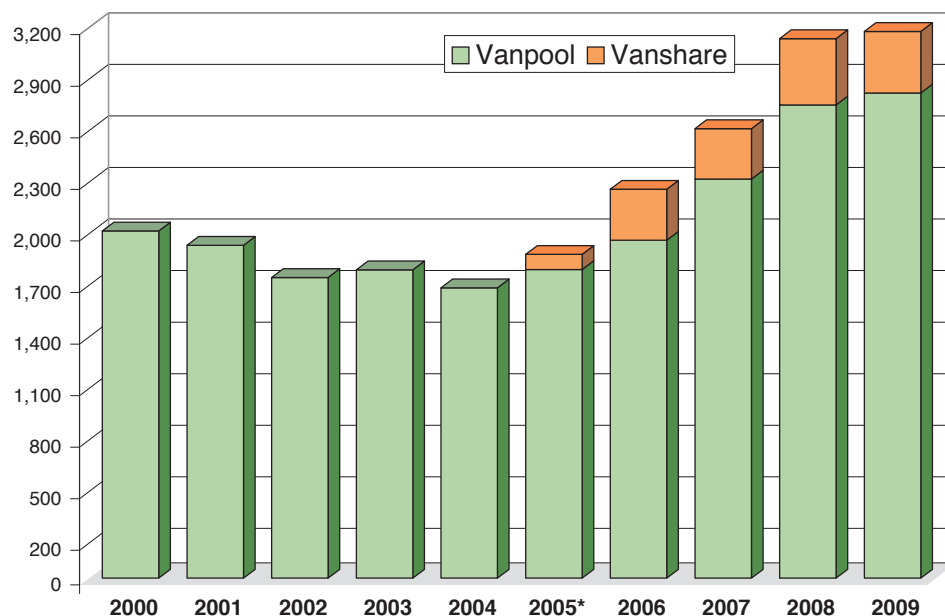
**A**fter setting an all-time record in 2008, Metro’s bus ridership declined somewhat last year. Combined motor and trolley bus boardings dropped 6.0 percent to 111.7 million, making 2009 Metro’s second-highest ridership year on record.

It’s not surprising that ridership declined in 2009. Employment in King County dropped about 5 percent, so there were fewer commuters. Gas prices spiked in 2008, giving ridership a major boost, then fell an average of 24 percent last year. Metro fares increased in February 2009. And after Link light rail started service in July, some Metro riders switched to Link.

But last year’s ridership numbers weren’t all going down. Despite the economic recession and lower gas prices, Metro’s VanPool and VanShare programs saw ridership increase by one percent in 2009. Although we had 10 percent fewer commuter vans in operation by the end of 2009, staff efforts to keep current riders and fill empty seats in existing vanpools—as well as a four-month \$40 Flat Rate promotion in September—helped keep ridership high.

Boardings on the South Lake Union Streetcar went up 9.2 percent in 2009 to a total of 451,000. With employment expected to increase dramatically in the South Lake Union area over the next year, streetcar ridership should see significant gains in 2010.

Commuter van boardings (in thousands)



\*Vanshare ridership data collected from June through December only.

#### In Transit



We'll Get You There

If you have any questions, comments or story ideas, send them to **In Transit**, KSC-TR-0824, or contact **Anna Clemenger**: 206-263-6482 or [anna.clemenger@kingcounty.gov](mailto:anna.clemenger@kingcounty.gov).

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# ON THE MOVE

Transit Division retirements, promotions/job changes, new hires, and remembrances

## Retirements

### Operations

**Ron Dunn**, operator (North Base) — April 1; 33+ years

### Paratransit/Rideshare Operations

**Eileen Patterson**, rideshare service representative (Rideshare Operations) — Feb. 26; 25+ years

### Rail

**Warren Davidson**, light rail operator — February 1; 20 years

### Sales and Customer Services

**Hazel Stroy**, assigned pass sales representative (Pass Sales) — Feb. 26; 13+ years

### Vehicle Maintenance

**Art Patajo**, equipment service worker — Feb. 28; 32+ years

## Promotions and Job Changes

### Rail

**Greg Reilly** to rail grounds specialist from rail laborer  
**Kevin Winter** to acting signals and communications chief from rail supervisor

### Sales and Customer Services

**Lisa Muhammad** to acting functional analyst III (CITRS) from pass sales representative (Pass Sales)

**Mayre Washington** to acting customer services coordinator-lead from transportation planner (Pass Sales)

### Service Development

(See “Sections reorganize” on page 6)

### Vehicle Maintenance

**Ed Mays** to acting supervisor of non-revenue vehicles from chief

**Chris Parrott** to acting chief of non-revenue vehicles from lead mechanic

## New Hires

### Transit IT

**Harvey Bendana**, systems engineer-senior — Feb. 1

### Vehicle Maintenance

**Darrell Pritchard**, mechanic — Jan. 25

## In Our Thoughts

**Mike “Bucky” Buchanan**, mechanic (Ryerson Maintenance), passed away on March 10

**Ed Cowart**, retired equipment dispatcher (Vehicle Maintenance, Central Base), passed away on March 4

**James “Jim” Patterson**, sheet metal worker (VM-Component Supply Center) passed away on March 28

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## General Manager

is paramount that we reestablish public confidence in the tunnel's safety and security. To do that, we are taking the following steps:

- We've hired a new company, Securitas, to start working in the tunnel in mid-April. These security guards will be able to intervene in situations such as the one in January.
- Metro Transit Police and the Seattle Police Department are working together to ensure better coordination between the two law enforcement agencies.
- We've requested a third-party review of our tunnel security operations by a national panel of transit security experts, led by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

We continue to explore other options for strengthening safety and security in the tunnel. We've bolstered Metro security in recent years by adding more transit police officers and increasing surveillance and other security assets on buses and at other Metro facilities (including park-and-rides and the tunnel). We have supported our base security committees, and are working closely with ATU Local 587, on operator security issues. One result of that cooperation is a new poster campaign aimed at reducing assaults on bus drivers.

We've made good progress, but we must maintain our resolve to address any remaining or emerging security issues. The safety and security of our customers and you, our employees, has always been—and will remain—a top priority at Metro.

— Kevin Desmond, General Manager